

Better site selection for meat poultry developments

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This factsheet sets out practical measures that poultry farmers can adopt to reduce the costs of preparing a development application for a new poultry farm. It may also help streamline the assessment of the application.

The cost and time required to complete a development application (DA) and get it assessed is directly related to the scale and complexity of a development proposal and the level of environmental risk.

Hence, the most practical and effective means of streamlining the application process and reducing the costs of gaining consent is to:

1. Select a suitable site with no significant environmental constraints;
2. Ensure adequate separation distances to minimise impacts on neighbours;
3. Investigate all possible issues and seek advice early, rather than having to back track;
4. Understand the planning process and legal requirements;
5. Prepare a quality Development Application that addresses all relevant issues.

Once you have purchased a site and conflict is entrenched it can be very difficult and costly to try and find effective solutions.

The level of community alarm about the environmental impact of the proposal can also increase the stress of seeking approval for a new poultry farming development. So consult widely, early and often, and act on the advice you receive.

Separation Distances

Good management practices are essential to minimise odour and noise sources. Appropriate separation between the source of odour and sensitive receptors such as a house or public area

is also critical to avoid land use conflict and ensure your poultry farm is sustainable.

Separation or Buffer

Separation distances for poultry traditionally extend across adjoining properties that are not owned by the grower. Not having control of how that land is used is a major risk to your business and your investment. It can also prevent future changes or expansion of poultry production.

In contrast a buffer is where you have legal control of the land needed to separate the poultry sheds from adjoining developments. A buffer is a sound business investment because it helps to:

- Limit the risk of land use conflict by protecting against a change of neighbours and / or incompatible development of the adjoining lot, such as construction of a residence.
- Minimise the ongoing cost and stress of monitoring environmental impacts.
- Avoid the need for expensive post approval attempts to reduce odour or noise impacts.
- Support on farm use of poultry litter.

Being appropriately separated from conflicting land use is not just about current circumstances. It is also vital to consider possible future development of your locality and business. Important matters to consider include:

- What is the zoning of adjoining lands?
- Do the allotments within the separation distance have an existing building entitlement?
- Are nearby areas likely to become future residential development areas?
- Is the available separation large enough to allow for future possible expansion of your farm?

Let's find a suitable site....

A suitable site will meet poultry production needs, such as accessibility, water and power. Its also essential to consider planning and environmental issues, including land use conflict.

Comprehensive advice on site selection is provided in the [best practice guideline](#) for the meat chicken industry.¹

If the site has minimal odour risks, then other conflict risk such as noise can usually also be satisfactorily managed.

Odour Separation for Meat Poultry Farms

The [NSW framework for assessing odour](#)² is a three level system.

Entry Level 1 assessment provides a simple, low cost means of rapidly identifying the likely odour risk and the required separation distance for a particular farming proposal. Industry research confirmed that the Level 1 odour formula for meat chickens provides the best surety that the separation distance will be sufficient to avoid unacceptable odour impacts³.

Level 1 assessment for meat chickens requires basic data on the size and type of poultry farm, the local topography and vegetation, prevailing wind flows and neighbouring residences. Its also useful to know the distance between the sheds and nearest residence.

A Level 1 odour risk calculator for meat chicken farms on the Department of Environment Climate Change and Water (DECCW) website (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/air/odour.htm) allows you to instantly calculate;

The number of sheds that can be fit on a particular site with minimal risk of odour conflict.

OR

The recommended separation distance between a particular poultry farm and the nearest neighbouring dwelling or other sensitive receptor, such as a school.

No further odour studies are required if the Level 1 assessment identifies that the available separation distance should result in minimal odour impact. This allows you to avoid more costly and less certain odour avoidance and mitigation strategies and to avoid additional monitoring costs.

¹ Currently [NSW Chicken Farming Guideline, 2004](#)

² [Technical Framework for Assessment and Management of Odour from Stationary Sources](#) in NSW, DEC 2006

³ Separation Distances for Broiler Farms, RIRDC 2010 (10/073)

If Level 1 assessment identifies there is a risk of odour conflict several options are available. You may be able to adjust your development proposal, for instance by reducing the number, size or location of the proposed sheds. You can also complete more site specific Level 2 or 3 odour assessment, which can take into account any additional odour control technologies.

Level 2 and 3 odour assessments use more costly odour and dispersion modelling. Although more site specific, the models rely on complex models and various assumptions that may compound any errors.

Relying on Level 2 or 3 assessment may also create delays in getting your DA approved as a technical review of the modelling may be needed and their may be disputes between odour experts.

Planning and environmental issues

Before committing to buy and develop a particular site you should also determine whether it is possible to meet legislative requirements under other legislation. For instance; do you need to clear native vegetation or remnant trees, or do you need a water licence?

It is useful to check if changing the design or location might avoid such additional requirements.



Figure 1, Shed located to retain a remnant tree.
Photo: J Blunden

Getting help

Site selection affects all subsequent management and operating costs. It is also fundamental to gaining approval and to the sustainability of your farm. Fortunately lots of help is available.

Contact your local council for advice on:

- Whether poultry farming is permissible in the local environment plan zone for the proposed location.
- Relevant regional or council strategies that may flag the locality as a target for future population growth.

- Relevant development control standards such as visual screening or set backs.
- Whether any other approvals may be required.

For instance you may need to contact and seek approval from; DECCW for larger scale operations or disturbance to aboriginal cultural heritage; NSW Office of Water for water licensing matters; your local Catchment Management Authority for clearing native vegetation; or the Roads and Traffic Authority for access to public roads.

Contact I&I NSW for advice on:

- Production, biosecurity and animal welfare matters.
- Current Best practice guidelines.
- Streamlining the development and assessment of your development application.

Hold a planning focus meeting for agencies

A planning focus meeting is held on site before the DA is lodged. The early identification of possible issues and responses a planning focus meeting can reduce subsequent delays in processing your DA.⁴ This is particularly useful for larger and more controversial poultry farming proposals.

Talk with your neighbours

Inform neighbours about your proposal rather than leaving them to rely on rumours and gossip. Check their concerns, listen well and ensure your application clearly addresses their concerns.

Additional information

Industry and Investment NSW's website (www.industry.nsw.gov.au) has information on a range of relevant topics. This includes:

- [Preparing a development application for intensive agriculture in NSW.](#)
- Best Management Practice Guidelines set out in the [NSW Meat Chicken Farming Guidelines.](#)
- Land use Conflict [Living and Working in Rural Areas. A Handbook for Managing Land Use Conflict Issues on the North Coast](#)
- Biosecurity and Animal Welfare.
- Environmental Management Plans.

⁴ Preparing a development application for intensive agriculture in NSW, NSW DPI 2006

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water website (www.environment.nsw.gov.au) has additional information on:

- [Air quality](#) and [odour](#) including relevant legislation, technical notes and guidelines for assessing and managing odour,
- [Level 1 odour risk calculator.](#)
- [Noise issues](#), Legislation and guidelines including the NSW Industrial Noise Policy
- A range of other topics, including Climate Change, Saving power, Chemicals and Pesticide and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

Various RIRDC Chicken Meat Research publications may also be useful (see <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/collections/cme>)



Figure 2, Sheds located in an isolated site.
Photo: G. Johnston

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